



COMMUNITY COMMENTS

THE SMALL
COMMUNITY
AS EDUCATOR

THE COMMUNITY'S
EQUITY
IN ITS SCHOOLS

by ARTHUR E. MORGAN

Volume XX

Number 7

October, 1970

Community Service, Inc., P. O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

THE SMALL COMMUNITY AS EDUCATOR

If we define education as the mental and moral development of personality we may say that the ultimate education is living. Different phases and aspects of education must be institutionalized and specialized out of the general processes of living, and so we have schools and colleges. But if the context of life is lost the institutions become harmful. The necessary context of life is not amorphous mass society but involves many units of living. Among these the family and the small community are both fundamental, and without them life degenerates.

Two recent conclusive studies demonstrate the relevance of these observations about current educational processes. The first is Zimmerman and Cervantes' book Successful American Families*; a report of a statistical study of what distinguishes those families that have kept their mental and social health and succeeded in living in eight American cities, regardless of whether they were rich or poor. A Ford Foundation grant made possible this study involving 54 thousand families, nine thousand students, and 232 school officials. Many variables were studied in this statistical analysis, and what was found to be overwhelmingly significant to success was the development of stable circles of fellowship of like-minded families within which the family and its members lived. A unit of about five families was found to be the basis of intimate mutual aid, cultural common ground and reinforcement of standards and values of those people who survived the disintegrating effects of urban living. The authors expressed the results of their study in the brief statement:

No matter what circumstance (biological, physical, environmental or social) makes children run afoul of the law, good, similar, intimate friend-families around the home, deter it, prevent, and help it from getting out of hand. At the same time these friends help to keep the children more interested in life achievement through the school system and make for better husband-wife relations within the home.

This is fairly conclusive evidence that the small group or community as a unit of life and of education is still essential to effective living.

*Successful American Families, by Carl C. Zimmerman and Sucijs F. Cervantes (Pageant Press, New York, 1960, 226 pages).

The second study is Urie Bronfenbrenner's Two Worlds of Childhood*, a comparison between American and Russian educational procedures. Bronfenbrenner shows that American schools are so preoccupied with individual intellectual development that the role of responsibility within the context of the group or community has been neglected. His studies show that the impact of the peer group on youth in America accentuates anti-social behavior, and the teacher is an authoritarian figure without a mutually supportive relation to the social group of youth. Furthermore, in America youth are removed from the growth of social responsibility and function that in practically all past human societies has been a crucial aspect of education. In those societies a person saw himself not just as a receptacle of knowledge to be regurgitated in examinations, but had pride in being a person who can produce and serve within a social context. The progressive development of social responsibilities--such as caring for a baby sister, driving the tractor, helping the family survive its economic adversity--are removed from experience of youth in America. The young are either stunted and unformed in this crucial aspect of education, or they develop anti-social responsibility to the gang, turning their creative powers against the society that has deprived them of healthy growth and whole-community association.

Bronfenbrenner shows that in Russia, following the pioneering work of Anton Semyonovich Makarenko, the schools are community-and-responsibility-oriented, with the result that the group reinforces social responsibility and youth grow in self respect in terms of what they can do for others and the responsibilities they are able to assume. The teacher and the janitor are not the primary responsibility-bearers as in our conventional schools, for in Russia sharing tasks and functions is conceived as fundamental to education.

Such a force of education was once the way in rural America. Youth grew up in communities in which mutual aid and strong traditions of expecting each person to do his part in the social whole were the way of society and at best extended into the schools. In such cases a teacher could expect students to teach each other, to do the chores and to maintain order as a matter of group morale. This was a more important part of education than learning to spell, and aided academic learning. Mutual aid in the small rural schools was reinforced by poverty and necessity. But the tradition of

*Two Worlds of Childhood, by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Russel Sage Foundation, New York, 1970, distributed by Basic Books, 230 Park Avenue, 190 pages).

upper class affluence and dependence on servants, associated in the more well-to-do schools with prestige and power, contributed to the progressive elimination of responsibility from the life of youth. Increasingly responsibility and initiative has concentrated in the hands of the administrator and the teacher, so that youth became creatures of and not participants in the system.

Academic schooling in America has increasingly segregated youth away from the adult community leaving the young surrounded by those of their own age. The power of the peer group is so great that when it is no longer given a recognized functional part in the educational process it asserts itself in increasingly unsocial ways, leaving the teacher isolated from the greatest source of influence over personality development. Various studies have proved this dominant educational influence of the peer group, some of them cited by Bronfenbrenner. In this connection he writes:

If a child is not with his parents or other adults, where does he spend his time? There are two answers to this question. First and foremost, he is with other children--in school, after school, over weekends, and on holidays. But even this contact is further restricted. The passing of the neighborhood school in favor of "educational advantages" made possible by consolidation, homogeneous grouping by age--and more recently by ability--has set the pattern for other activities, so that from preschool days onward a child's contacts with other children in school, camp and neighborhood tend to be limited to youngsters of his own age and background.

Bronfenbrenner warns:

If the current trend persists, if the institutions of our society continue to remove parents, other adults, and older youth from active participation in the lives of children, and if the resulting vacuum is filled by the age-segregated peer group, we can anticipate increased alienation, indifference, antagonism, and violence on the part of the younger generation in all segments of our society--middle-class children as well as the disadvantaged.

Bronfenbrenner has shown from Soviet example that what has commonly been assumed to be the necessary impact of industrialization and specialization on our schools is not necessary and that we can and indeed must regain some of the priceless qualities in the earlier whole-community educational forces that made America vital. He asserts that ;

The greatest significance of the total community, especially for the disadvantaged child, lies in the fact that many of the problems he faces, and the possibilities for their solution, are rooted in the community as a whole and are therefore beyond the reach of segmental efforts at the level of the neighborhood, and school, or the home.

To master these problems, he urges "our emphasis here is on local initiative and concern. We believe this is the place to start, for that is where the children are."

Bronfenbrenner points out that the Russian and American school systems have complementary strengths and weaknesses, and that we can choose the best from each.

If the Russians have gone too far in subjecting the child and his peer group to conformity to a single set of values imposed by the adult society, perhaps we have reached the point of diminishing returns in allowing excessive autonomy and in failing to utilize the constructive potential of the peer group in developing social responsibility and consideration for others. Moving to counteract this tendency does not mean subscribing to Soviet insistence on the primacy of the collective over the individual, or adopting their practice of shifting major responsibility for upbringing from the family to public institutions. On the contrary, what is called for is greater involvement of parents, and other adults, in the lives of children, and--conversely--greater involvement of children in responsibility on behalf of their own family, community, and society at large.

The third study dealing with this general area, one of the most important and carefully developed in America, is Youth and the Future*, the General Report of the American Youth Commission, published in 1942. The conclusions are similar to Bronfenbrenner's published twenty eight years later. A few quotations illustrate the quality of thinking in this Report.

*Youth and the Future, The American Youth Commission, Owen D. Young, Chairman; Floyd W. Reeves, Director (American Council on Education, Washington, 1942).

It is only by providing real experiences of the most vital sort that young people can be given adequate raw material from which to construct attitudes and build character, or even be given a basis for appraising the immense amount of vicarious experience which now presses in upon many of them.

If experience is limited and inadequate, personality and behavior can hardly fail to be the same. Moreover, if the adjustment of personality to the realities of life does not take place concurrently with the physical and emotional changes of adolescence, adjustment may be impaired for life and a true maturity may never be achieved. This is the great danger which may result from too much protective care in childhood and youth, and from too long a postponement of adult responsibilities and opportunities. The peacetime provision for youth has consisted mainly of multiplying opportunities for participation in passive processes of education, while constantly postponing opportunities for productive activity to higher and higher ages.... Youth unemployment is so devastating, not because of physical suffering and material loss, even though these may be considerable, but exactly because it attacks the basis of youthful loyalty and idealism.

Finally with regard to school consolidation the Commission asserted:

In stressing a plan of district organization which is necessary if suitable educational opportunities are to be provided for adolescent youth, the Commission is not unmindful of the values which have attached to rural community life around the small district school. Every effort should be made to retain and strengthen these values. This can be done by continuing to provide schools close to the homes of the pupils in the first four to six grades, by carefully observing community boundaries in laying out the school attendance areas, and by continuing to give parents in the various communities an advisory relationship to the administration of the neighborhood school. In some states, consolidation of attendance areas as well as governing districts has proceeded so vigorously under the financial pressure of recent years that small children are now being transported long distances, and real damage has been done to rural community life.

Disillusionment with old education procedures has resulted in conflict between the educational authorities of the state and the individuals and communities seeking freedom to participate, to pioneer and to maintain local community schools. The state is pressed with the need to cope with the increasing economic failure of rural society. It assumes that this economic situation is a necessary result of the impact of modern technology. The state's answer to this problem lies in expensive super-consolidated schools as means of preparing youth for what it conceives as the inevitable migration to urban employment. This basic presupposition of educational administrators is under attack. The economy is not only failing rural areas and youth, but is failing in the cities as well. To predicate that huge schools are necessary to fit youth into inhuman aspects of an economy is like the militarists predicating continuous expansion of military spending in consequence of the growth of military technology. The consequences in either case are increasingly disastrous.

.... Against this background the case for basic civil rights of the people in their schools needs to be asserted. The following article "The Community's Equity in its School," written in 1958, is still timely, although expressed in terms of the issue as it appeared twelve years ago.

--Griscom Morgan

COMMUNITY COMMENTS is issued four times a year (and copyrighted) by Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. Subscription: \$2 a year. Community Service, Inc. is a non-profit organization devoted to serving the interests of the community as a basic social institution, invites membership and support from persons interested in this field. 4 part of the dues paid by members is credited to Community Comments subscription.

THE COMMUNITY'S EQUITY
IN ITS SCHOOLS*

On Local Autonomy

The schools of the northern United States originated as true folk institutions, as integral parts of their communities. Through them the community functions as a democratic organism. Democracy and true community can live only where the members work together on matters of consequence, and participate significantly in the determination of policy and program. When any vital function is removed from the community, what remains is less of a community and has less of the quality of democracy.

It should be the part of federal and state educational agencies to stimulate interest in the schools, to inform, guide and assist, but not to dictate. Local autonomy is more than a policy, it is a vital principle.

On Freedom to Explore

Education is in flux as never before. New possibilities are emerging which promise to be revolutionary, such as television classroom teaching, putting the smallest classroom within reach of the ablest teachers in America in each subject. New concepts are emerging as to what are the most vital elements of personal development. The significance of family and community, as the chief agencies for preserving and transmitting the most vital elements of the cultural inheritance, is dawning on students of society. In this period of flux and of promise, to freeze the educational structure in vast, arbitrary mass consolidations, and to extinguish varied smaller units which might serve as laboratories and pilot plants for the new possibilities which are on the horizon, would be tragic. The presently planned centralization of schools into massive units would tend to be a one-way process, from which retreat would be difficult or impossible. Wide variety of approaches to educational structure and administration today should be not only tolerated, but eagerly welcomed.

*From a statement to the Ohio State House Conference on Education, October 28, 1958, by Arthur E. Morgan, Delegate. Prepared with the cooperation of Yellow Springs delegates, and with school and college educators, Yellow Springs, Ohio, October 27, 1958.

Mass Consolidation Has Not Proved Itself

The sizes of social groups to which children are biologically and psychologically adapted are definitely limited, and depend on age and other factors. For children to live and work in larger groups tends to create very serious stresses and maladjustments. Long bus trips may have harmful consequences in many cases. Children taken away from family and community lose the intimacy of neighborly good will and mutual confidence which is the foundation of high character.

The seeming economies of big units are largely delusive. Hidden costs loom large. Excellently managed and effective small schools are being operated at the same or smaller cost than the massive units. America today suffers from obsessive commitment to size. Unless we can emerge from that, the damage may be great and long lasting.

In some cases school consolidation is wholesome and desirable. But it is not the panacea it is being considered. Instead of state-wide mass programs for school consolidation each case should be studied and determined on its individual merits, and decision should be in the hands of those most directly concerned, with the counsel, guidance and assistance, but not the coercion, of the central authority.

The Community Equity in our Schools

We can agree that a rapidly changing, complex society involves educational problems of great complexity, and that everyone should feel concern and should actively engage in improving the quality of our educational services. It is clear that, because of wide differences in the distribution of population and of wealth, there should be equalization of educational opportunities which calls for action by federal, state and local units of government and administrative authority.

The danger is that under the pressure of circumstances these problems will be dealt with as administrative necessity, rather than by considering fundamental educational needs. If the solutions which are written into law and translated into minimum standards are the product of administrative exigency, a rigidity may result which in the long run will be very seriously restrictive.

Real estate has been the primary tax base of local schools. Commonly the most valuable and productive land is maintained in large farms with few children per district, and poorer people are forced to live more densely on poor land which is the tax base for their schools. Supplementary tax support of foundation programs

designed to help equalize school support may become tools by which local school districts are coerced to consolidate. Poorer districts for which financial aid was designed are sometimes deprived of aid to force them to consolidate.

We may fail to realize that, because of variations in community and social character and structure, the wide difference in human beings, and the great variations in mobility of population, different communities may have problems which require different solutions. In one quarter of one county 90% of the people--suburban and semi-rural dwellers--are new comers, and there is little community consciousness. In another quarter of the county two-thirds of the families have been resident for half a century or more, and community life is strong. A program which is very well suited to one community may be very ill-suited to another, and therefore, statewide uniformity of educational pattern may be deadly to the normal personal development of the children involved.

Above all, it is important to find agreement on the application of the fundamental democratic principle that in order to enlist the active, creative and imaginative participation of people in solving their own educational problems there must be opportunity and incentive for them to find their own answers, with counsel and guidance from federal or state authorities, or from other qualified sources. There is needed a clear recognition that it is not necessary for us to choose between a do-nothing course and centralized dominance. There is a third alternative, that of fully recognized local autonomy with state and national stimulus, guidance, encouragement and assistance.

Our public schools have been among the most active areas of community participation. If we take policy formation away from our communities and place it in the state capital we shall have given our common democracy one of its most severe wounds. People must have vital community interests if democracy and community are to be more than an empty shell. Wherever some vital functions are removed from the community, some of the quality of democracy is lost. People tend to lose interest in policies that are ready-made for them. A common expression over the nation is, "What's the use? What can we do?"

There is a justified widespread fear of educational dictation by our federal government. It has been pointed out repeatedly by writers on government that power generally leads to authoritarian control. The people of the nation generally insist that the functions of the federal government in education should be limited to counsel, research, encouragement and financial assistance, and should not extend to control, except where universal and fundamental human rights are concerned,

as is the case with the issue of segregation.

There is the same reason to fear domination of local units by the state. The proper function of the state, through its legislature and Board of Education, is to stimulate local initiative, to furnish information and guidance, and to help provide conditions through which a high quality of educational leadership, guidance and resources can be available to the local units, while encouraging local autonomy in policy-making.

That State Departments of Education have sometimes gone too far in exercising authority has been shown by legal cases, as in that of Ohio's East Hocking School District where the Court found that "actions of Eyman, Garrison and Dillon (of the State Department of Education) made it plain this particular merger was to be effected regardless of methods." "Efforts to dictate the school program under consideration . . . violated the rudimentary concept of our theory of government."

The existence of the doctrine of state control is evident from the following statement from page 4 of the 1958 "Discussion Guide" for Ohio schools:

There is a popular myth that public education in Ohio is primarily a matter of local control. Actually, under Ohio's constitution the state is given full responsibility and authority over the public school system.

The only powers which the Ohio School boards possess are those which have been granted by the legislature. State authority extends to the very existence of school districts.

This is an inaccurate interpretation of the historic facts. The school system of our northern states developed as essentially a folk institution. It was governed by the state much as marriage was governed by the state. The state licensed marriage, and had the power to interfere in any home where fundamental human rights or decencies were violated. The state could also give financial or other encouragement to families. The state, conditioned by the federal and state constitutions, being the supreme power, could do anything to the family, or could quite eliminate it. What protects our families from state control is the tradition and temper of the people.

If we should say that the only powers which a family possesses "are those which have been granted by the legislature," we might be technically accurate, but to proceed from that basis and to enforce standard family programs would be false to the tradition and spirit of our

autonomy in education should continue as a right, and not as the tolerance of a central power.

The proper function of the educational enterprise in a democracy should be to seek ways to free men in order that they may most effectively participate in the age-old quest to develop themselves fully. Schools in a democracy must have a different orientation, goal, and dedication from those under centralized control. We should not let the present crisis push us in the direction of an authoritarian pattern as apparent in some of our legislation and as is coming to be reflected in our schools. If state school authorities encourage schools to state their philosophy and goals, the state authorities cannot consistently prescribe ways of reaching these goals. If size, organization, program and method are fixed from outside in advance, there may be little opportunity to give expression to freely developed philosophy and goals. The administrative pattern tends to fix the result. Our communities need elbow room to meet new challenges as these arise. We need time and encouragement to work out and develop new and changing patterns of relationship between federal, state, and local resources in our common educational enterprise. Neither federal nor state legislation should be used to regiment local groups.

Educational Policy is in Process of Rapid Changes and Should not be Fixed and Frozen by a Policy of Enforced Extreme Consolidation.

Our population growth, with its resultant pressures on school finances and building needs, and the dramatic evidences of Russian accomplishments in the field of education, have combined to produce a feeling of crisis and even of panic. It is easy under such conditions to accept a simple solution offered by respectable authorities. Men of sincere purpose, who believe consolidation to be a desirable and necessary step, can now present a crash program which will satisfy the public demand for action. The need, however, is not for a crash program but for a thoughtful, mature appraisal of existing conditions and future probabilities.

Public education today is somewhat in the condition that local passenger transportation was in about 1900. In its early days America had depended on the horse and buggy for local travel. About 1900 interurban electric lines were accepted as the answer to the problem of travel to near-by points. Individual or family conveyance was rapidly becoming obsolete, and was looked upon as the method of the primitive past. Everyone went for interurban electric lines. For instance, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, the last word in "sound" railroading, with securities as highly regarded as government bonds, went all-out for interurban electric lines, investing much of its accumulated capital in trying to control all the short-distance transportation of New England. But there was

country. In the same way the claim of the State to control of our schools is false to the tradition and spirit of our history. ✓

Timon Covert, specialist in school finance, U. S. Office of Education, expressed a wide-spread opinion when he wrote:

The question of local autonomy is considered of vital importance by leading authorities in the field of school administration. A careful reading of the literature on the subject leads to the conclusion that our public schools have developed in truly American fashion because they enjoyed local initiative.

Writers and school officials frequently express the opinion that school administration should be such as to promote a maximum degree of local interest. Any plan for school administration, they contend, should foster rather than suppress local initiative.

It is the ancient and very general impulse of bureaucracy to strive constantly to extend its functions and to increase its powers. That world-wide tendency is a chief menace of democracy. Only as it is resisted can democracy live. Wherever participation in determining issues is denied, democracy dies, or finds other forms. In large industry the average worker has no voice in the formation of policy. Either he accepts the status of a ward of a benevolent master, or he tries to find a way of participation through labor unions, or he loses interest. In religion, if the determination of policy is at a distance, the individual has the choice of accepting the status of a ward of a benevolent master, or he can leave and join a group in which participation is possible, or he can lose interest in the subject.

In public education the situation is more difficult. The state Department of Education has power of life and death over private as well as public education. The alternative of independent action is being taken away. It has explicitly claimed this power, while indicating that in case it should approve of divergent policies it might allow them to be continued. Private education and public education policy would live by its suffrance. What that claim has been may be judged from the statement by the State Department of Education in the case of the Mill Creek Local School District, the charter of which had been summarily revoked by officials of the Ohio State Department of Education. It was the contention of the Department that: "The State Department of Education is engaged in organizing a sub-unit government as a part of the State System of Education when it charters high schools as opposed to licensing and granting a privilege to a high school." (From the brief of the State Department of Education before the Court of Appeals.) Local

failure to realize the automobile was coming along and that individual and small group travel was a great human need. In a few years the interurban lines were sold for junk. The formerly "gilt-edged" New Haven Railroad went into bankruptcy, and never recovered its former strong position.

Education today is in a position similar to that of short-trip passenger traffic in 1900. Small school units represent a deep and fundamental human need, and though now on the way out may soon be found highly desirable. Television teaching has shown much promise. In a few years it may be possible to bring to our children a great variety of courses taught by outstanding teachers using the very best resources available. The expense and time of pupil transportation may well be outmoded, and children may have more time for schooling, for shop work, for learning skills by working in the community, or even by resuming a share in family life. Both family and community can then recover fundamental values now being lost through centralization. The savings in transportation money may compensate for any extra cost of the new programs. Teachers, relieved of arduous preparation for teaching several subjects, may have time and opportunity to encourage the individual development of the children.

Wholesale school consolidation is such a revolution as never before has occurred in education. It affects the fundamental structure of our society. There is no clear judgment of its wisdom. It tends to be a one-way course from which there may be no return. The great financial investment and the destruction of existing educational structure tends to close the door to other alternatives.

It is very much the part of wisdom to establish the principle of local autonomy, so that there can be a wide range of exploration in educational method. The tacit assumption that the future of our schools is so clear that we are justified in eliminating all but the standard types demanded by many State Education Departments is not sound. There should be wide tolerance in the types of educational administration which are allowed or encouraged.

Mass Schooling Has not Proved Itself.

What we have to say here about small and consolidated schools is not presented as indicating that consolidated schools do not have a place, and perhaps a large place, in the educational pattern.

But even under existing conditions there is no uniformity of opinion as to the relative merits of large and small school units. There are soundly established reasons for questioning the wisdom of eliminating small schools. It is a well recognized

biological principle, which applies to young children as well as to the young of any species, that they thrive best in social groups of a size to which their biological nature is adapted. If that number is substantially exceeded as in bus travel and on school grounds, stresses are set up which commonly are very harmful. Small children may feel these stresses very keenly, and yet never give clear expression to them. There may result serious and long-lasting maladjustments. In the normal growth of a child he best adjusts himself first to the small, intimate group of the family, then to the somewhat larger group of the small community, and then to gradually larger groups as he grows older. The large consolidated school, and the buses used in transporting children, violate that principle.

Many authorities can be cited in support of this general principle. For instance, the influence of the size of residential institution on the mental health of disadvantaged children is emphasized in the Report of the World Health Organization, with its world-wide study and observation, from which the following is quoted:

So many wise books and reports have appeared in recent years on the principles which should be followed in organizing institutions for children that little discussion is called for here. All are agreed that institutions should be small--certainly not greater than the 100 children suggested by the Curtis Report--in order to avoid the rules and regulations which cannot be avoided in large establishments. Informal and individual discipline based on personal relations, instead of impersonal rules, is possible only in these circumstances. . . .

There is no difference of opinion regarding the size of the group (within the institution); all agree that it must be kept small. Probably the best size depends largely on the age of the children for whom provision is made. The younger the fewer is a sound principle.

Some of the fundamentals of child psychology, which later have come to be applied to children in general, have been worked out with such groups which could be under close observation.

A striking example of one superiority of small school units has been observed by Mrs. Hilda Livingston. A small rural community school (grades 1 to 6; 65 children; 3 teachers) was a major factor of meeting the needs of children who had been forced to leave their homes, and who had been provided with city schooling, where they suffered severely from stresses and maladjustment. Several of them were transferred to this small, ungraded rural school. These included timid, hostile, withdrawn, immature and retarded children. The more personal "human size" situation made it possible for the "confused" child to feel accepted and at home in the smaller group, and to have

a feeling of "self worth." In such a setting, patience, acceptance, and motivation could play their parts.

"Retarded" children were able to attend classes on two grade levels, without the embarrassment of being a big child among littler ones, and without the need to be adjusted to two teachers. Where a shunning of school attendance had been the result of retardation or other embarrassment it became possible for some of the children to complete four grades in two years.

These children, who had been "maladjusted" in a large school, found themselves through being parts of a human sized group, of a size natural for children of their ages, and where personal attention and acquaintance with a varied group was possible. Many a child, not quite sufficiently maladjusted to command special attention, suffers through the years and acquires permanent warps of personality, because he is put in an environment not suited to his age and his biological stage of development.

Civilization resides, not in our blood, but in our society. Traits we prize most--honesty, good will, courtesy--are not inborn; neither are their opposites. They have been gradually learned, and are passed on by teaching and example. Through the ages, family and community have been the chief means of carrying human culture from generation to generation. Fine character is mostly formed early in life, where mutual confidence and good will live best and are learned best--in intimate family and community. The profound significance of family and community is rapidly dawning on students of society. In another generation that realization may be general. What a pity if by that time all vestiges of intimate community schools are gone, and we are irretrievably committed to centralized mass education! Especially is this the case when the supposed financial advantages involved are by no means proven.

Reports of the comparative costs of small and large schools may be very misleading. Some of them report average costs in which unprogressive districts and small schools are compared with modern large schools. Modern methods of administration as practiced in some districts in other states have reduced the cost of small schools of high quality to the point where they are in line with comparable large schools.

Conclusion.

If we are to enlist the active creative imagination of our children, citizens and school personnel in identifying and solving their own educational problems, it is imperative that federal and/or state agencies should conceive of their responsibility as something other than control and dictation of policy. They should seek ways in which communities can be

encouraged to work vigorously at their own problems, and to work at these problems in an atmosphere of mutual trust. New and better solutions can be arrived at, in our opinion, only if each community is given maximum encouragement and support to meet its problems, rather than to be compelled to comply with the letter of the law on minimum standards imposed on them by external authority.

We need to take into account the wealth of experience available to us in our able teachers. Among our resources are many able and informed citizens. We need to study carefully the possibilities of pools of special teachers and services to be available to several or many small schools. We need research in methods and possibilities. Above all, we need as never before to approach our educational problems as questions to be answered in their relation to today's world. This is a tremendous undertaking which requires trust and cooperation at all levels, and a definition of functions so that responsibility may be effectively located. State administrators engaged in such activities will be more useful than if engaged chiefly in enforcing standards. To identify and to clearly state principles through which this cooperation may be brought about is a major task confronting the education profession and the concerned public.

Extracts from: CONSOLIDATION: BARRIER TO DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

BY Maurice F. Seay, in Educational Leadership, Journal of the
Assn. for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National
Education Association, May 1953, page 486.

The consolidation of two or more attendance units into one large attendance unit may create a situation which definitely thwarts the development of a community school. Such reorganization may lead to the development of a school with a very large enrollment but with no sense of community belonging, a school with great emphasis upon subject matter but with no consciousness of the relation of the subject matter to real problems, a school with extensive diversification in program but with little concern for general education, a school with high idealism with respect to national and international goals but with a record of achieving only superficial understandings since it has no local community to which it can relate the larger geographic concepts, a school that is emotional over the role of community life but actually sees this role as a nostalgic exercise. . . .

Advocates of school consolidation have frequently rested their case upon the fact that a large school can offer a greatly diversified program. Today this is not so convincing an argument as it used to be, for we now believe that greater emphasis should be placed upon general education for all and that there should be less specialization until completion of secondary education. . . .

Yes, we want new horizons; we want to develop understandings of national and world problems. But we also want to give our students an understanding of community problems. Fortunately we have discovered that we can most effectively accomplish all these goals by developing community schools. Let us not allow over-enthusiasm for school consolidation to deprive us of the power for revitalizing our communities that is inherent in the community school.

Extracts from: THE SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY by Howard Y. McClusky,
in The North Central Association Quarterly, April 1941

Historically the school has operated apart from and above the common life of people. . . . the leaders of education have in the past tried to maintain the school as a cultural isolate sealed off from the stream of the community.

But the isolation of education is gradually yielding to superior insight into the relation of the school to society. We are finally catching up to the recognition of the unitary character of human experience and are beginning to discover the web of social relationships in which individuals and institutions are interlaced. . . .

Society is more and more attempting to pass on to the school functions which non-school agencies formerly assumed. However, there is a distinct limit to the assignments which the school can properly undertake, . . . Since the community comprises all the forces and agencies of an area, it is plainly impossible for the school to attempt to assume the task of the community. . . .

Two contrasting developments are appearing in American society. One is the startling tendency toward the centralization of economic and political power and the other is a less spectacular movement toward the decentralization of group activities. . . . The school is in the community. It should accept this fact wholeheartedly.